Volume 4, Number 9 September 1995

Freedom Watch

Citizens Project

It's Time To Support the Human Relations Initiative

By Jody Alyn

The time has come for all good folk to come to the aid of their community. The Colorado Springs Community Initiative (a group of which Citizens Project is a participant) has completed its proposal to advance human relations in Colorado Springs. We plan to present this proposal and supporting testimony to the Colorado Springs City Council on Tues., Sept. 26.

The Community Initiative has been hard at work since January, devising an alternative to the dysfunctional Human Relations Commission. You may recall City Council's straw vote to disband the HRC on Jan. 9. The subsequent outpouring of public concern from business communities, minority groups, and distressed citizens prompted Council to reconsider that action.

The City Council then gave interested parties six months in which to propose options for addressing the problem of human relations. The ad-hoc group that had formed to protest Council's original decision grew into the Community Initiative working group, led by a Steering Committee of ten.

Months of animated discussion and occasional tensions produced a draft, which underwent several revisions. In May, the diverse interests of our members came together in a final proposal, and the group arrived at formal consensus on the document we will present to the City Council on Sept. 26.

The problem of human relations in this city is real, but not always easy to pinpoint statistically.

Recommendations

Our proposal to the Colorado Springs City Council recommends several separate actions. They are:

- Reaffirm the city's commitment to human/community relations, and to promote mutual understanding and fair and equitable treatment among the people of our community.
- Establish a Human Relations Board that will help resolve disputes; gather and disseminate information; provide referral, education, and outreach; encourage and support human relations activities of private agencies; and promote the community ethic of respect and understanding.
- Create a public/private partnership to screen and nominate Board members for appointment by Council, in order to assure broad community representation on the Board and commitment to the mission of the Board by potential members.

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Here's What You Can Do

Want to have an impact on the Sept. 26 City Council meeting? Here are six simple steps you can take:

1. Call Citizens Project (520-9899) or Urban League (634-1525) to get your free packet of information on the Community Initiative proposal, including the complete proposal.
2. If you are part of a group or organization that would like a speaker from Community Initiative, call Jerome Page at 634-1525 to make arrangements.
3. If you live in Colorado Springs itself, write to the Colorado Springs City Council, or directly to your favorite city councilpersons. The mailing address is 30 South Nevada, Colorado Springs, CO 80903, or Box 1575, Colorado Springs, CO 80901.
4. If you live in Colorado Springs, call the City Council or call your favorite city councilpersons. You can leave a message for them at 444-2222, or you can try to call them directly at 578-6600.
5. Don't hesitate to write a letter to the editor at the *Gazette Telegraph* or one of the other Colorado Springs papers.
6. If you have or can make the time available, come to the City Council meeting September 26. The exact time has not yet been scheduled, but you can call 578-6680 before the 26th to get the schedule.

We'll look forward to your support!

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Guest Article

Introducing CAPS

by John Gudvangen

In a recent issue of *Freedom Watch*, guest writer Dan Koen of the Colorado Springs Education Association described how public schools are under attack. His piece summarized this attack as an alliance of powerful political extremists who wish to impose their doctrine on public schools, and corporate interests whose motivation is to profit from the multi-billion dollar education industry.

Mr. Koen called on our community to insure that public education remains in the public interest instead of falling into the hands of extremist groups and others who would divert funds to promote their own special interests.

"We want to avoid the shock experienced when school boards are taken over to dismantle the public education system."
— *Sid Snyder*

In response, a number of concerned individuals formed CAPS.

The mission of CAPS

Community Action for Public Schools (CAPS) is a local coalition of community members, teachers, parents, and others who are working to support public education and shield our area school districts from extremist attacks. The mission of CAPS, simply stated, is to preserve, promote and improve public schools in the Pikes Peak Region.

While our long-term plan is to join forces across districts to support and improve public education, our immediate focus is on the upcoming November school board elections. Our fall activities will include voter identification, candidate questionnaires, publicity about education issues, campaign advice, and public awareness of school election issues.

"Our group recognizes the strengths and weaknesses of public education and would like to identify candidates who are interested in improving schools for the public interest, not special interests," said Sid Snyder, an active parent in the Academy school district. Snyder added, "We want to avoid the shock experienced by some communities when school boards are taken over to dismantle the public education system. CAPS is a pro-active attempt to defend public schools."

November elections

All area school districts will hold school board elections this November, and in many cases, a majority of the seats in each school board are up for election.

Colorado Springs' largest school district, District 11, has four seats open on their seven-member board. All other area school boards have five-member boards. Academy District 20, Falcon District 49, and Harrison District 2 will elect two members each. Manitou Springs (District 14), Cheyenne Mountain (District 12), Lewis Palmer (District 38), and Woodland Park (RE-2) each elect three members. The Widefield school board will have four open seats.

Many school boards will have incumbent board members seeking re-election. Interested candidates must turn in their petitions by September 1.

Citizen participation

Freedom Watch readers are aware of some concerns in our local districts. While no extremist groups currently dominate any Pikes Peak Region school board, we at CAPS will work to make sure this does not occur in November. CAPS will share information among citizens in different school districts to increase citizen awareness of, and participation in, the November school board elections.

We welcome your help. If you are interested in becoming active with CAPS, call Dan Koen at 471-1190.

Ed. note: *Both Citizens Project and CAPS will provide information on the November school board elections. Our different emphases will help voters prepare for the election and support public education. Citizens Project will publish a candidate survey, hold forums in a number of districts, and publish additional issue and candidate information in Freedom Watch. CAPS plans to endorse and support individual candidates.* **CP**

Focus on Focus Groups

Last spring, Citizens Project hosted a series of Focus Groups. Our hope was to provide a forum in which our Sustaining Partners could offer feedback and direction to the organization.

These groups were loosely structured around three questions: what has Citizens Project done well, what can we do better, and what should be our future priorities. Board members facilitated the focus group sessions.

We were pleased to have tapped into a wealth of creativity, animated conversation, and warm appreciation.

Participants consistently gave high marks to Citizens Project for our moderate stance on issues and in the community. They lauded our ongoing attempts to encourage dialogue and promote a well-informed public. *Freedom Watch* received many accolades for its well-written contributions to these ends, as did the Candidate Forums and Dialogue Dinners.

Participants expressed strong sentiments that we maintain our momentum and continue to focus on drawing the community together. They wanted both our positions and our events to be better publicized. They thought our Board and constituency should be as broadly representative of the community as possible and encouraged efforts to increase racial and ethnic representation.

Recent guest editorials in *Freedom Watch* resulted directly from one Focus Group member's suggestion to expand our connections with other organizations. Other suggested priorities included supporting school districts and public schools; becoming a positive, alternative voice for families; encouraging diversity education; and working to improve communication between diverse religious and cultural groups.

A very relevant observation came from one of the Focus Groups. When invited to visit the Citizens Project office, one participant made the point that he is just more comfortable contributing money. Another said that before she had money to give, she gave of her time. Someone then said, "Volunteers are sustainers, too." This group encouraged Citizens Project to broaden its view of "sustainers," and to continue to value the critical contribution of time made by our many volunteers.

We continue to value the diversity of contributions made by numerous individuals to our organization. Citizens Project is blessed with fabulous supporters, and we are grateful for all of their many contributions. Your participation in these Focus Groups helps us "stay in touch."

Our Focus Group series will resume in September and will take place once a month. You are invited to participate in one! For further information or to sign up for this one-meeting commitment, call Megan at the Citizens Project office (520-9899). Space will be limited. **CP**

Human Relations Initiative

[Continued from page 1]

- Adopt a city-wide anti-discrimination ordinance, to be written by the city attorney.
- Transfer the city's human relations specialists to the city attorney's office.
- Dissolve the Human Relations Commission as it currently exists.

Concerns by the Council

Initial informal discussions of this proposal with members of City Council revealed some concerns. Most notably, members of Council simply did not believe that Colorado Springs has a problem in the area of human relations, particularly race relations. Several Council members were quick to point out that no complaints of discrimination have come before them in the past year. Other Council members indicated that their support of the proposal depended on community backing.

Members of the Community Initiative are in the process of assembling data to illustrate the need for mechanisms to address human relations concerns at the local level. We are also working to involve more interested business, religious, minority, and service people in the Colorado Springs community.

The problem of human relations in this region is real, but not always easy to pinpoint statistically. How does one quantify the incident in a restaurant, when white customers were seated before three black business associates who had arrived first? Or the experience of one prominent black community leader who, while at the Broadmoor Hotel on business, was asked to park a car by a white patron? And how does one address the dramatic fact that the criteria for hate crimes allow many available statistics to be subsumed under other headings?

Opposition by others

A primary opponent of our human relations proposal (surprise!) is Colorado for Family Values. Kevin Tebedo has vilified both members of the Steering Committee and the proposal itself (while also stating that the evil inherent in this document isn't obvious to those who read it because it is so cleverly written). Although there is absolutely no reference to either "special rights" or homosexuals, Tebedo nonetheless denounces our proposal as another manifestation of his dread "homosexual agenda." Further, Mr. Tebedo indicated that there is no longer any need to address minority civil rights in our community, since, according to him, "The civil rights baby…is now clean." (For more on his views, see the *Baby and Bath Water* box).

Now is the time to help our City Council "see" the problems of race relations — of *human* relations in this city.

The opposition from our critics raises certain questions. Do they believe that Colorado Springs is somehow different and that we have no ugly racism? If that is the case, then their opposition might be appropriate. Or, do they advocate an unfettered "right of association" that the American people should enjoy free from government interference? If so, then their opposition will promote the right to continue to discriminate, no matter how extensive such racial discrimination may become or how destructive to our society.

CFV's stated concerns are but one more illustration of how the problem of human relations goes way beyond data. CFV's positions on violence, disability and obesity (see box) put forth the Orwellian notion that while all people might be equal, some are more equal than others.

You can help our City Council "see" the problem

During an informal meeting, one City Council member made the statement – emphatically – that she just didn't see skin color. It simply wasn't an issue. When told by a Community Initiative Steering Committee member that such a statement was personally painful, since it meant that she didn't see him – or his children – she said, "Well, that's just how I am. I don't see it."

Now is the time to help our City Council "see" the problems of race relations – of *human* relations in this city. We urge our city government to approve the Community Initiative proposal which provides an appropriate means for addressing local concerns locally. We encourage all members of our community to support this proposal and to speak out for fairness, respect and equality in Colorado Springs. **CP**

On Babies and Bath Water

In a letter dated June 16, 1995, CFV's Kevin Tebedo gave his reaction to the Community Initiative proposal on human relations. In that letter, Tebedo elaborated on the "baby and bath water" analogy that he and a Community Initiative member had discussed.

Kevin wrote: *"Your point about throwing the baby out with the bath water is well taken. However, this premise assumes there is a baby in the bath water. The baby is analogous to something of value, and the bath water is the corrupt residue left over when the valuable object is clean. The issue of civil rights is valuable; it has been washed by hundreds of years of law and money. The combination of citizens groups and government action has created plenty of 'bath tubs' where any American citizen may go and get washed. The civil rights baby is no longer in the bath water because he is now clean. The residue of this process, however, has been the ever-increasing attempts of illegitimate 'babies' (the homosexual subculture, 'lookism,' the 'differently abled,' the obese, just to name a few) to wash themselves in the same bath water, and their doing so has muddied the water."*

By most calculations, black emancipation occurred only in the last 130 years or so; women won the right to vote only 75 years ago; and the Civil Rights Act guaranteeing equal rights regardless of race, religion or national origin – but not gender – became law only 31 years ago. Each of these landmarks occurred after long and significant opposition. Perhaps Mr. Tebedo refers to some other country washing these issues in "hundreds of years of law and money." It would not appear to be the one we live in.

However, apparently even CFV believes that all that washing may not have made the "baby" of racial discrimination clean after all. The section on violence in CFV's recently-published Community Standards Resolution contains these thoughts on continuing racism in our culture: "The high representation of blacks and Hispanics in our jails and detention centers is a direct result of children growing up without fathers in the home and a generally less active, positive family unit in those communities. These facts have led to an environment where young minorities are perceived to be more dangerous and may lead to unfair and even outright racist treatment."

CFV's statements, although simplistic, affirm that racism and racial discrimination continue in our society. Are absentee fathers the only reason for this continuing racism? That would deny decades of psychological, sociological, and historical research identifying a myriad of factors that contribute to the over-representation of these minority groups in the corrections system, and would ignore the complex socioeconomic and educational obstacles faced by minority families.

CFV's statements themselves show the need for a strong and continuing human relations commitment here in Colorado Springs. **CP**

Book Review

Naming the Antichrist:
The History of an American Obsession

As we near the end of the millennium, there has been a rise in apocalyptic thought, especially by ultra-conservative Christians. Robert Fuller's enlightening new book traces the historical and uniquely American preoccupation with identifying and objectifying our enemies by labeling them the Antichrist. In fact, he maintains that without the concept of the Antichrist, there would be no fundamentalist movement today.

Fuller, a professor of religious studies at Brandeis University, begins by explaining that the Antichrist is Satan's chief agent for deceiving humankind prior to the Second Coming. Although biblical references to the Antichrist are few and obscure (the term appears a total of four times), the idea of a powerful, supernatural foe has captured the imaginations of conservative Christians for centuries. Growing out of Jewish apocalyptic thought, references to the Antichrist in 1 and 2 John, Daniel, and Revelation served to hold a fractious early church together by exhorting the faithful to distrust each other and rely solely on God.

This book traces the uniquely American preoccupation with objectifying our enemies by labeling them the Antichrist.

Apocalyptic thought has subsequently waxed and waned, but seems to grow at times of crisis, so that followers can believe that even in the darkest hour, God will appear and victory will be assured. The everyday world is transformed into a cosmic battle of mythic proportions.

Through the centuries, the identity of the Antichrist has been open to interpretation and change, depending on who's pointing the finger. To Martin Luther and many after him, it was the Pope. The Puritans believed Native Americans fit the prophesy, which made it easier to remain godly while killing them indiscriminately.

Colonists saw the Antichrist as King George, and with their victory over the British, they gained a certain sign that God was on their side. In the Nineteenth Century, the work of the Antichrist was seen, by Northerners at least, in slavery and later in the non-Anglo immigrants crowding into the cities.

The next great flourishing of apocalyptic thought began around the turn of this century and produced the fundamentalist movement we know today. Faced with evidence of evolution and living in an increasingly pluralistic society, some conservative Christians came to oppose the principal intellectual trends of this century and reverted to the principle of biblical inerrancy.

The everyday world is transformed into a cosmic battle of mythic proportions.

By the 1920s, the basic tenants of fundamentalism were in place and bear striking similarities to those of the present: the Bible was literally true; progressivism was seen as the enemy; education was under the control of the Antichrist; and those who were not white, Anglo-Saxon Protestants were threatening the promise of America as God wanted it to be.

Interestingly, fundamentalists became increasingly inclined to separate themselves from the evil of the rest of society, so that God could more easily identify them when He returned. Doing good deeds, such as helping the poor, actually played into the hands of Satan by postponing the final cataclysmic confrontation between God and Satan. Better to sit tight and await the Rapture than to get tangled up in the ugly goings-on of the rest of society and postponing the inevitable.

The Antichrist becomes a mechanism for provoking distrust of a pluralistic, tolerant society.

Also intriguing is Fuller's assertion that, because fundamentalists tend to believe that all of history is consorting against them, they see conspiracies everywhere. The Antichrist, after all, is at work in many places. The Antichrist thus becomes a mechanism for provoking distrust of a pluralistic, tolerant society.

Fuller does not believe the current rise in apocalyptic thought and fundamentalism bodes well for our future. He concludes, "[T]his relentless obsession with the Antichrist appears to have done more to forestall than to signal the realization of the Kingdom of God on earth."

This book is highly recommended for those who struggle to understand the fundamentalist worldview. **CP**

CFV Tries Again

CFV's Strike Three!

Our last *Freedom Watch* described the evolution of CFV's Community Standards Resolution from the original stridently anti-gay version to a revised version, which was more moderately anti-gay. Citizens Project offered copies of both the initial and the revised resolutions, so that you could see the changes yourself. Many of you called and received copies.

The *Gazette Telegraph* printed CFV's revised resolution on its op-ed page July 26, and requested comments from the public. The vast majority of the response letters (as published by the *GT*) denounced CFV's resolution. "Encourages and approves hatred" and "intolerance for other views" were some of the published comments. Some city council members and other community leaders spoke out in a *GT* news story to indicate that CFV's new push is inappropriate and unwanted.

CFV revised its resolution yet again. The new re-revised resolution again tones down the anti-gay content and beefs up the anti-violence and anti-obscenity sections. This third revision also backs off from blaming divorced and single parents for the evils in our society.

Kevin Tebedo unveiled this third revision in his August 4 news conference. It's different and it's better, said Mr. Tebedo. And indeed, the language of this third revised resolution was considerably changed from the first version, although its many problems remain. Mr. Tebedo highlighted one problem at his news conference, when he admitted that even this latest revision remains "exclusionary."

Two days later, the *Gazette Telegraph* expressed its disapproval in a long editorial. CFV's new resolution, the *GT* said, "invites government intervention in areas of life where it does not belong and needlessly dredges up the debate over issues such as Amendment 2."

Nonetheless, CFV remains determined to present our local governments (city councils, county commissioners, and school boards) with many signed petitions supporting its resolution. CFV's August 4 press release said it would present these petitions so our elected officials will "keep in mind these standards when setting policy, deciding how our tax dollars are to be spent, and when considering what events to officially sanction."

The devil, as they wisely say in this situation, is in the details. When asked at his press conference for examples of the policy changes he would wish his newly revised resolution to accomplish, Mr. Tebedo said that perhaps schools might not want to rent space to gay groups in the evenings, even if this space were otherwise available for rental to the general public. CFV supporters have also pressed the public library in Grand Junction not to permit book displays by PFLAG (Parents and Friends of Gays and Lesbians), although the library had invited all non-profit groups to display books.

CFV has been remarkably mum on what other changes in governmental actions or policy it would like its resolution to accomplish. CFV's approach has been to first urge this resolution on our local officials. If CFV can make a big enough impression with its petitions, the resolution would then become a useful lever to induce our officials to make life much more inhospitable and discriminatory toward gays, gay groups, and all others who might be supportive of gays.

The CFV agenda thus moves the next step beyond its successful "Equal rights, not special rights" of Amendment 2 days. CFV's new, but more muted, slogan for its anti-gay program has become: "Not even equal rights."

What should you do? When CFV and its followers surface to present their petitions to your local elected officials, you should be there expressing your opinion as well. Call Citizens Project then for copies of the *Gazette Telegraph's* editorial and for other documents showing the many reasons that CFV's new anti-gay campaign is strikingly bad public policy. **CP**

For your free copy of all three versions of CFV's proposed Community Standards Resolution, call Citizens Project at 520-9899.

Announcements

Dr. Trigg on culture wars

Dr. Gerald Trigg, senior minister of First United Methodist Church, will present five lectures on culture wars and the church's mission. These begin at noon Wed., Oct. 18, with the same lecture to be repeated at 6:30 p.m. All lectures will be at First Methodist Church, 420 North Nevada Avenue. The lecture series, which has a $5 charge for materials, will continue each Wednesday through Nov. 15. Dr. Trigg believes that people of religious faith have often been the major combatants in these culture wars because they believe "God is on our side." He will challenge this position, suggesting a correlation between "ethnic cleansing" and "ethical cleansing." For further information, call the church at 471-8522.

Dan Barker comes to the Springs

The Colorado Springs chapter of the Freedom From Religion Foundation is sponsoring a number of local appearances by well-known speaker Dan Barker. Dan is a former evangelist who wrote *Losing Faith in Faith: From Preacher to Atheist.* He will make the following appearances. Sept. 23-27: radio station KVOR (AM-1300) at 11 a.m. Saturday; Sunday at 9:15 a.m. at All Souls Unitarian Church (730 N. Cascade); Monday at 11:30 a.m. on TV channel 11; Tuesday at 3 p.m. on KVOR (the Chuck Baker show) and at 7 p.m. for a forum discussion at Colorado College; and finally Wednesday at 6 p.m. at the University Center at UCCS for a debate on creationism. For more information, call 535-0320. **CP**

Yes, I would like to help support Citizens Project. Enclosed is my contribution of:

❑ $15 ❑ $30 ❑ $50 ❑ $100 ❑ Other

Contributors of $15 or more will receive future issues of *Freedom Watch* and candidate surveys by mail, and will also receive special notices about Citizens Project activities.

Available for suggested donations

- ○ "Celebrate Diversity, Create Community" mug – $5*
- ○ Citizens Project T-shirt – $14* (specify size)

*Add $3 shipping and handling

Available for free

- ○ "Create Community" bumper sticker
- ○ "Celebrate Diversity" bumper sticker
- ○ August issue of *Freedom Watch*

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Thank you for your support. Please note contributions are tax deductible.

Inside CP

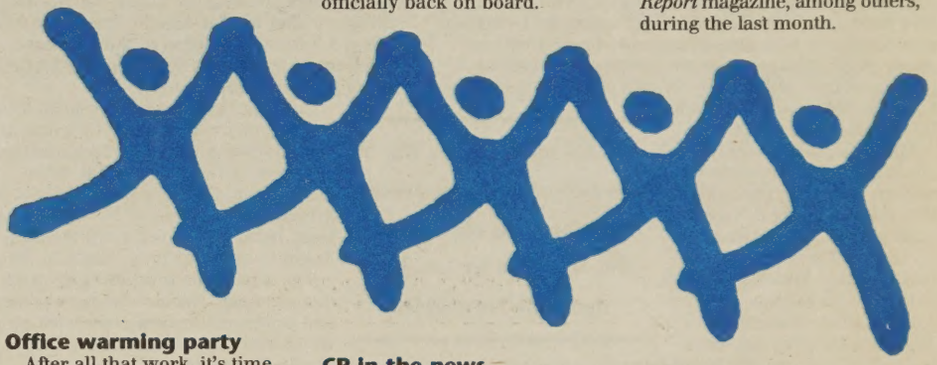
A heartfelt thank you

Twenty wonderful volunteers helped move Citizens Project into our **new home at 31 East Platte** on July 29. We finished the move in five hours and celebrated afterward with free pizza from Poor Richards. A ringing "thank you" to all the volunteers who helped us make a smooth transition to our new digs.

Amy is back

Amy Divine has rejoined the Citizens Project Board of Directors. She had taken a short leave of absence for health reasons, during which she certainly was not absent. We are thrilled to have her officially back on board.

Richard Skorman was on KVOR's Chuck Baker radio show with Kevin Tebedo on August 8, and KKTV taped Peg Bacon vs. Kevin Tebedo for its Sunday morning program. **We put ourselves on the line for you.** In addition, Amy Divine was interviewed by the *Los Angeles Times, San Diego Union,* and the Associated Press for other stories related to Citizens Project. Megan Day has provided background information to *U.S. News & World Report* magazine, among others, during the last month.



Office warming party

After all that work, it's time for a party! Join us in celebrating the opening of our new office on **Sun., Sept. 17, from 2-6 p.m.** Feel free to show off your culinary skills and bring some goodies for this pot luck-style gathering. Again, a special thanks to the Sustaining Partners, contributors and volunteers who made this move possible.

CP in the news

CP has been active in the controversy about CFV's proposed Community Standards Resolution. Doug Triggs appeared on KKTV's evening news August 4,

Two Internship openings

We are still collecting applications for a Programs and a Journalism Internship. The Programs Intern will help with the upcoming school board candidate survey and forums. The Journalism Intern will serve as a reporter and help edit *Freedom Watch.* If you are interested, please contact Megan at Citizens Project (520-9899) for specifics about these Internships.

If you are interested in the Journalism Internship, please send your resume and two writing samples to Citizens Project by **September 11.** If you are interested in the Programs Internship, please send your resume to Citizens Project by **September 4.** Thanks. **CP**

Our Mission: Citizens Project is a grassroots organization in the Pikes Peak region dedicated to upholding the traditional American values of pluralism, freedom of religion and separation of church and state.

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